

PEOPLE & THINGS: By ATTICUS

It seems that the language spoken by Jesus, Aramaic, is at last doomed to extinction. Thanks to its isolation, Maloula, a remote village in Syria, had so far resisted the encroachment of Arabic, which is the common language of Syria and Palestine, but first a new road connecting Maloula with Damascus and now the opening of a Government school, which will teach only in Arabic, threaten the language with final extinction.

Thus will disappear from colloquial use a language which was used by Abraham before he lived in Canaan (Genesis xxvii, 47 and Deuteronomy xxvii, 5) and which eventually supplanted classical Hebrew after the Babylonian exile as the language of the Jews.

Toscanini

MUSIC-LOVERS throughout the world have been distressed by reports from New York of Signor Toscanini's final retirement from the rostrum. I hear, however, from an authoritative source that the Maestro is still not averse to the idea of another visit to London, and that his withdrawal from the N.B.C. need not, in fact, be taken as proof that he will never again direct an orchestra.

His retirement is due, my informant assures me, as much to the gradual dispersal of the N.B.C. orchestra as to any failure of Signor Toscanini's powers. Many of its members, fearing that their great leader would presently retire, had tendered their resignations elsewhere, with the result that the once matchless ensemble was losing much of its character.

Those lucky enough to have heard the Maestro's broadcast of "Un Ballo in Maschera" last winter will join me in hoping that he may yet consent to pick up his baton once again in the Royal Festival Hall.

Speleo-Gastronomy

A BOOK which I have always wanted to see is the annual report of that society of affluent French gastronomes which calls itself the Club "Gourmand". It is unknown to its top-secret pages, and it is hardest of all upon those once-great restaurants which are now collapsing beneath the weight of their own reputations.

The decline of certain famous houses is, of course, a matter of public commonplace. There is compensation, however, in the emergence of a restaurant like the

Grottes de Matata at Meschers-sur-Gironde. Monsieur Matata's establishment differs from most of its kind in being built in a prehistoric cave. Warm in winter and cool in summer, this delectable great stand high above the Gironde and its *palourdes farcies* and *migroure de poisson* attract pilgrims from as far afield as Bordeaux, Limoges and Poitiers. In the language of Michelin "ça vaut le détour."



A Lovesome Thing

I HAD thought that concrete gnomes and toadstools were the ultimate refinement in garden decoration, but the Americans, ever to the forefront in the quest for gracious living, have now invented mechanical butterflies which will flutter continuously over the flowerbeds. Mounted on swivel heads, they have plastic wings and rustproof metal stems terminating in wooden pegs. The hand you see in the picture, not, I think, the hand of my colleague Mr. Theo. Stephens.

Cordial Entente

FIFTEENTH last marked the thirtieth anniversary of the Entente Cordiale and I despatched a representative to celebrate it at Cognac as the guest of Messrs. J. and F. Martell, who have preserved a private alliance with England since 1815.

He reports that Alken prints, club armchairs, and bound volumes of "The Field" are the outward signs of an address which has been fortified at Downs, at Cambridge, and on the rugged field.

Cognac itself remains much as it was when Dickens described it in 1855—a fast-spread, thick-populated area of single-storey ware-

houses, blackened with the spongy fungus that breeds on the brandy fumes, and aromatic with the toffee-like smell of burning sugar.

A Smiling Town

IT is exactly a century since the merchants of Cognac presented the British Army in the Crimea with brandy the value of one thousand pounds; and with comparable kindness that they received the infantrymen of the Press.

The visitors were made free of the smiling, affluent little town; and as they admired the two-ton chandeliers, the ancient cedar-shaded gardens, and the incomparable vintages, they agreed with Dickens's prediction that "between England and Cognac there is a friendly feeling which is not likely to be the less permanent because it rests on the foundation of the pocket."

Master (Race) Pieces

A NEW batch of Adolf Hitler's water-colours has recently been unearthed in the Ducal Palace of Bolzano in the Italian Tyrol whither the Fuehrer consigned them for safety when the invasion of Germany began.

There are twenty of them, mostly painted during the Battle of Stalingrad, when Hitler shut himself up for days and painted nostalgic street scenes of Munich capped by penny postcards.

Herr Adenauer has politely declined to accept them as a gift, and the Italian Government are now considering an exhibition whose proceeds would go to Italians who suffered under the Nazis.

The Government might be wiser to sell them before artistic fashions change. A Hitler painting recently went for nearly £2,000 in New York.

Celestial Cruise

LAST week Tokyo was dazzled by the arrival of the Canadian Coronica bearing 500 rich American tourists on a "Cherry Blossom Visit," during which they spent half a million pounds and literally emptied the reserves of yen in the downtown banks.

After clearing the stores on the Ginza of their most expensive neckties and old-fashioned plaques of green-backed locusts assembled for a farewell banquet in the Imperial Hotel, were ravishingly pleased, waitresses flattered among them as a hidden string-orchestra softly played airs from "Madam Butterfly" and "The Mikado."

As the crisp new thousand-yen

notes scattered round the dining room like falling cherry petals, the bland assistant-manager of the Imperial commented to my correspondent: "It only needs General MacArthur to take me right back to the good old days of the Occupation."

The Aga Khan's Horses

AS the Aga Khan is seventy-seven this year, it is not perhaps surprising that he is cutting down his racing stable. For he himself handles most of the organisation of his racing affairs, working out the breeding programme and so forth; and he now wants to give a good deal of his time to establishing his youngest son as an industrialist in Pakistan.

A mutual friend who has been seeing something of him in Cannes this last week tells me that His Highness hopes people in England will not get the wrong impression of his intended sales of bloodstock. He will still be a very large owner of racehorses: indeed only M. Boussard and Baron Rothschild will have bigger establishments at least on this side of the Atlantic.

Scent Secrets

SINCE the Valley of the Roses in Bulgaria came under Soviet control, attar of roses has been in short supply and scent manufacturers have turned their attention to other flowers. They have been particularly successful with the production of essential oil from Lily of the Valley and Lilac and now the true scent of honey has been recovered, for the first time for a beseeching perfume.

My source for this exotic information is Mr. Douglas Collins of Goya, who first became interested in scent when he was working at the Carlton in Cannes, and frequently visited Grasse.

In 1937 he set up his own firm and broke down the English woman's resistance to buying expensive scent by selling it cheaply in very small bottles, of which the popular size is one-fourteenth of an ounce. Advertisers presented another problem since if it is suggested that a particular scent is so good that everyone is using it sales decline and women prefer exclusive perfumes.

I asked him how he hit upon the now famous trade name of "Goya." "Well," he said, "I was messing about with letters trying to make something and I ran into that combination. Then, a few months later, someone told me there was a painter of the same

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